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[Item#1](#)

Dangerous Ground: The Spratly Islands and U.S. Interests and Approaches. Strategic Studies & International Studies. Clarence J. Bouchat. December 27, 2013.

The Spratly Islands disputes are the nexus of interests and clashes for U.S. partners and competitors that will draw in the United States as it involves itself more in Asia-Pacific issues. The analysis explains these disputes and how the United States may better address them.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1187> [HTML format with a link to the PDF file, 181 pages, 3.43 MB].

Item#2

Africa's Booming Oil and Natural Gas Exploration and Production: National Security Implications for the United States and China. Strategic Studies & International Studies. David E. Brown. December 30, 2013.

Two key long-term energy trends are shifting the strategic balance between the United States and China, the world's superpower rivals in the 21st century: first, a domestic boom in U.S. shale oil and gas dramatically boosting America's energy security; second, the frenetic and successful search for hydrocarbons in Africa making it an increasingly crucial element in China's energy diversification strategy.

<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1186> [HTML format with a link to the PDF file, 337 pages, 2.15 MB].

Item#3

Arab League Boycott of Israel. Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress. Martin A. Weiss. December 19, 2013.

The Arab League, an umbrella organization comprising 22 Middle Eastern and African countries and entities, has maintained an official boycott of Israeli companies and Israeli-made goods since the founding of Israel in 1948. The boycott is administered by the Damascus-based Central Boycott Office, a specialized bureau of the Arab League. This report provides background information on the boycott and U.S. efforts to end its enforcement.

<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33961.pdf> [PDF format, 10 pages, 227.31 KB].

Item#4

Putin's Gas-Fueled Bailout of Ukraine. YaleGlobal. David R. Cameron. January 2, 2014.

Ukraine's government has decided to link its fortunes to Russia, accepting a bailout worth billions after the European Union and the International Monetary Fund offered mere millions combined with tough conditions. Russia will settle a disputed gas bill, reduce the price of future gas deliveries, end some customs controls and import quotas recently imposed and provide financial assistance in exchange for Ukraine not signing an Association Agreement with the European Union. The scale of the bailout "made it clear that, although the consequences may be geopolitical, the impetus for Ukraine's decision was economic and the struggle one that Europe could have won," writes the author. The former Soviet republic is politically divided between those who support preserving deep ties with Russia and those who want to build connections with the European Union. Meanwhile, tens of thousands continue turn out in Kiev protesting corruption and closer ties with Russia.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/putin%E2%80%99s-gas-fueled-bailout-ukraine> [HTML format, various paging].

Item#5

In Deficit Debate, Public Resists Cuts in Entitlements and Aid to Poor. Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. December 19, 2013.

The latest national survey by the Pew Research Center, conducted Dec. 3-8 among 2,001 adults, finds majorities say it is more important to maintain spending on Social Security and Medicare and programs to help the poor than to take steps to reduce the budget deficit. Nearly seven-in-ten (69%) say it is more important to maintain current Social Security and Medicare benefits than to reduce the deficit, while 59% prioritize keeping current levels of spending for programs that help the poor and needy over deficit reduction.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.people-press.org/files/legacy-pdf/12-19-13%20Deficit%20Release.pdf> [PDF format, 16 pages, 541.10 KB].

Item#6

Raising the Federal Minimum Wage to \$10.10 Would Lift Wages for Millions and Provide a Modest Economic Boost. Economic Policy Institute. David Cooper. December 19, 2013.

This paper provides an analysis that reflects higher state minimum wages and the changes in economic conditions over the past year. It begins by providing some context for the current minimum wage and the Harkin-Miller proposal, describing how today's minimum and the proposed new minimum compare with historical benchmarks. It then provides a demographic overview of the workers who would be affected (both directly and indirectly) by raising the federal minimum wage to \$10.10. Finally, it details the GDP and job creation effects that would occur as a result of such an increase.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://s4.epi.org/files/2013/Raising-the-federal-minimum-wage-to-1010-would-lift-wages-for-millions-and-provide-a-modest-economic-boost-12-19-2013.pdf> [PDF format, 22 pages, 421.33 KB].

Item#7

Worries About the World Economy for 2014. YaleGlobal. David Dapice. December 20, 2013.

Uncertainty and uneasy interdependence characterize a 2014 forecast on global economic growth. High rates of unemployment persist in developed economies while emerging economies rely on those nations for exports and jobs for their own citizens. The International Monetary Fund forecasts 3.5 percent growth for 2014 - or less - and economist David Dapice analyzes factors that could hamper that growth: The US Federal Reserve is pulling back from monthly bond purchases pouring massive liquidity into global markets; congressional priorities remain skewed. Europe and Japan post low growth amid many policy challenges. China's growth is higher, but it must maintain jobs while reducing pollution.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/worries-about-world-economy-2014> [HTML format, various paging].

Item#8

Social Media Update 2013. Pew Internet & American Life Project. Maeve Duggan and Aaron Smith. December 30, 2013.

Some 73% of online adults now use a social networking site of some kind. Facebook is the dominant social networking platform in the number of users, but a striking number of users are now diversifying onto other platforms. Some 42% of online adults now use multiple social networking sites. In addition, Instagram users are nearly as likely as Facebook users to check in to the site on a daily basis.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

http://pewinternet.org/~media//Files/Reports/2013/Social%20Networking%202013_PDF.pdf [PDF format, 18 pages, 578.94 KB].

Item#9

More than 11 Million: Unauthorized Immigrants and Their Families. Maria E. Enchautegui. The Urban Institute. December 23, 2013.

The effects of immigration reform proposals will extend well beyond the 11 million unauthorized U.S. residents. Those unauthorized immigrants share their homes with 8.7 million people who legally reside in the United States. Three quarters of those legal residents are U.S. born citizens and 60 percent are children.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/412979-more-than-eleven-million-fact-sheet.pdf> [PDF format, 2 pages, 169.41 KB].

Item#10

Celebrating Christmas and the Holidays, Then and Now. Pew Research Religion & Public Life Project. December 18, 2013.

Nine-in-ten Americans say they celebrate Christmas, and three-quarters say they believe in the virgin birth of Jesus. But only about half see Christmas mostly as a religious holiday, while one-third view it as more of a cultural holiday. Virtually all Christians (96%) celebrate Christmas, and two-thirds see it as a religious holiday. In addition, fully eight-in-ten non-Christians in America also celebrate Christmas, but most view it as a cultural holiday rather than a religious occasion.

[Note: contains copyrighted material].

<http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/12/Christmas-survey-2013-full-report.pdf> [PDF format, 27 pages, 925.33 KB].